

Stingaree Bordello
303-324 Island Street
San Diego
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-2214

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, CA 94102

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

"STINGAREE BORDELLO"

HABS No.
CA-2214

Location: 303 - 323 Island Street,
Southeast corner of Third and Island Streets,
San Diego, California 92101

Name Clarification: The building was never a bordello but was constructed on the site of a former bordello and thereafter this erroneous historic name was applied.

This report repeats the erroneous name because it is this name that the State Office of Historic Preservation, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and all other pertinent agencies use to describe the property.

Present Owner: Horton Grand/Saddlery Hotel, a California general partnership

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant, last used as low cost housing.

Significance: The 1979 Eligibility determination was made under Criteria A: of local significance as an integral part of the Chinese business community.

Documentation of the historic structures of the region by Charles Hall Page and Associates in 1980 found the building to have had a minor role in Chinatown and to have no direct associations with events that made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: March 29, 1916

2. Architect: None

3. Original and subsequent owners: References to the chain of title to the property at issue are in the Office of the County Recorder of San Diego County, San Diego, California. References are listed from the purchase of the property by the person who built the existing structure, to the present.

1914 Deed, December 14, 1914, recorded in Book 664, at page 226, Tom Kay to A. E. Wilson.

1916 Notice of Completion, March 29, 1916, recorded in Book 46, at page 122, by A. E. Wilson.

1946 Deed, May 16, 1946, recorded in Book 2119, at page 389, to A. E. Wilson and Minnie Wilson as joint tenants.

1946 Deed, July 16, 1946, recorded in Book 2169, at page 386, Minnie Wilson to Morrison and Wilsons.

1951 Deed, August 6, 1951, recorded in Book 4230, at page 248, Morrison and Wilsons to Wong K. and Susie Tong.

1954 Deed, February 16, 1954, recorded in Book 5142, at page 478, Wong K. Tong and Susie Tong to Bing Kong Tong.

1984 Deed, December 19, 1984, recorded at Instrument No. 85-024810, January 24, 1985, Bing Kong Tong to Horton/Grand Saddlery Hotel, a California general partnership.

4. Builder, contractor: Louis A. Geisler

5. Original Plans and construction: Notice of Completion, only record of construction, is attached as Exhibit #1.

6. Alterations and additions: The common wall between Units #305 and #307 was removed sometime after 1954, when the Bing Kong Tong acquired the property, as the combined units were used as their meeting hall until 1984.

The only public record of the building is the Residential Building Record, attached as Exhibit #2, with remarks dated July 10, 1959, indicating an inaccurate understanding of the building: the inspector thought the mezzanine was one large, 100 x 20 apartment, rather than the upper story of each unit.

No permits were ever taken out for the building after its construction in 1916.

B. Historical Context:

The surroundings:

The building's significance is found primarily in its location in the heart of what was San Diego's historic Chinatown. In 1916, when this building was built, the home of the founder of San Diego's Chinese community, Ah Quin, was just two doors to the south on Third Avenue. San Diego's primary Chinese market, Woo Chee Chong, was across the street at the southwest corner of Third and Island. Just south of Woo Chee Chong was a popular herb store. Further south on that side of Third Street was the site of a weekly pig roast. All of these landmarks are gone.

Only two buildings of significance remain from that period, the Ying-On Merchants Association building on the northwest corner of Third and Island and the Chinese Benevolent Society building on Third near J Street.

The tenants:

According to San Diego City directories for the first ten or fifteen years after the building's completion many of the units were rented to Chinese merchants:

Sang High Co. at 303 to 305 Island from 1916 to 1930

Tai Sing Co. at 307 to 315 Island from 1916 to 1924

Gin Lay Co. at 317 to 319 Island from 1916 to 1920

Sang Fat Co. at 307 to 317 Island from 1916 to 1924

Quong Yee Woo at 321 to 323 Island from 1916 to 1919

Chey Loy Co. at 321 to 323 Island from 1922 to 1923

This pattern seems to have diminished after the 1920's however and most of the current older residents of the area remember the building as being primarily residential during its last fifty or so years of use.

The owners:

As indicated in the Statements submitted as part of the Preliminary Care Report on this project, Mr. Tong, the first Chinese owner of the property, bought the property because one of his relatives was in residence there and he believed the building would provide low cost housing within what was then the Chinese neighborhood. The subsequent Chinese owner of the property, Bing Kong Tong, a fraternal organization, maintained the property as low cost housing.

Present historical context:

As indicated in the Statements by long time residents James Hom and Joseph Quin, this neighborhood has changed substantially since the building was built in 1916, and little of the historic Chinatown remains. They, Sally Wong and Dorothy Hom agree that this building possesses no significance for their community; they believe the project will do more for local history by recreating two important Victorian hotels and by initiating a Chinese Historical Museum.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A one and one half story hollow clay tile and wood frame utilitarian building without any particular architectural style or design.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair to poor condition, there is evidence of uneven structural settling, windows and doors are uneven, and the settling of the windows has cracked off stucco. The building has had no permit work undertaken since construction in 1916. A 1959 Assessor's inspection rated its overall quality as low.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 45 by 100 feet, one and one half stories.

2. Foundation: concrete slab.
3. Walls: hollow clay tile covered with cream colored stucco.
4. Structural system, framing: wood frame construction.
5. Porches, stoops, etc: A metal awning runs the length of the rear facade.
6. Chimneys: none.
7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Individual entrances to each of eight units, front and rear. Front doors are topped by transoms with address number. Some units retain double screen doors and internal doors, others have single screen doors. All were once painted aqua. Rear doors unremarkable, provide access to street exit and water heaters. West elevation has a single door to street. The east elevation has no door.

b. Windows and shutters: Each residential unit contains a front single sash window, with the exception of the west end unit which has two windows. The windows are topped by transoms. The upper one half story has 16 windows on both the north and south elevations spaced at regular intervals. All eight units have windows on the ground floor south elevation. The west end unit contains two additional windows on the west elevation, while the east elevation has no window opening.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: flat, distinguished only by gabled parapets over the third and sixth units. The upper half story roof is also flat with only a central low parapet. The covering is standard roofing material, tarpaper.

b. Cornice and eaves: Front projecting eaves of approximately one and one half feet on lower level; upper story roofline and side elevation rooflines are distinguished by a projecting molding. -

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: none.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Describe by floors

First floor of each unit is a long, narrow rectangle, approximately 11 feet wide and 45 feet deep. The front room, 11 by 20, receives natural light from the door window and the front window. A small hall leads from the southeast corner of the front room; past a small bathroom, past a narrow staircase leading up in a westerly direction, and ending at the small kitchen at the rear. The rear exit is from the kitchen.

Upper half story of each unit is approximately 11 feet by 20 feet and receives natural light from both North and South windows. In some units this upper story is blocked off from the lower floor, in others, an open railing allows an overlook of the front room of the lower floor. A small closet occupies the east wall of each upstairs room.

2. Stairways: Small, narrow wood stairways, less than 3 feet wide lead to each upper half story, partially paneled by wood slats.

3. Flooring: Varies from unit to unit, linoleum, carpeting and concrete, all in poor condition.

4. Ceiling and wall finished: Painted plaster, trim of horizontal wall molding in the front room of some units.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Interior front doors contain upper glass panel, exterior screen door. Rear doors contain upper opaque glass panel.

b. Windows: Single sash front window in each unit opens into front room. Each kitchen contains one opaque square window adjacent to the sink. The upper half story of each unit contains four casement windows which open out for ventilation.

6. Decorative features and trim: None apparent except for horizontal molding in one unit, #317.

7. Hardware: insignificant and often missing.

8. Mechanical equipment:

A. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: no systems apparent, space heaters used by tenants.

B. Lighting: few fixtures in place.

C. Plumbing: poor in quality and condition.

C. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Mixed use area dominated by industrial, storage and warehouse uses. Building facade is at sidewalk of both Island Street on the North, and Third Avenue on the West. Rear of units separated from adjacent industrial storage by only 5 feet. East elevation of building on property line of another storage site.

2. Historic landscape design: none.

3. Outbuildings: none.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings: None found.

B. Early views: Earliest found is a 1946 aerial view attached as Exhibit #3.

C. Interviews:

Dr. Ray Brandes, Historian, University of San Diego, under contract with Centre City Development Corporation for entire Marina/Columbia Redevelopment Project and historic archaeologist for New Town San Diego and Gaslamp Quarter.

Mr. Ron Buckley, Historical Site Board Secretary and City Planner responsible for site and region.

Ms. Patricia Butler, environmental planner for Centre City Development Corporation, and responsible for all environmental impact report and analyses of CCDC projects.

Mr. Wayne Donaldson, preservation architect for Horton Grand/Saddlery Project and member of Historical Site Board.

Ms. Pam Hamilton, Vice President of Centre City Development Corporation and responsible for project.

Ms. Beverly Hom, President of Board of Chinese Community Social Services Center, located one half block from project site, the only remaining community organization in region.

Ms. Dorothy Hom, leader of local Chinese Community and primary force behind recognition of local historical sites and heritage, early supporter of Chinese Historical Museum concept with husband, former Councilman and Assemblyman, Tom Hom.

Mr. James Hom, businessman and resident of the area for over sixty years, friend of residents of the subject property.

Mr. Peter Hwang, Southern California correspondent for Chinese Daily News.

Ms. Mary Joralmon, President of Save Our Heritage Organization, local preservation activist organization.

Mr. Bruce Kemerling, Curator of San Diego Historical Society Research Archives.

Mr. Andy Lamm, President of Bing Kong Tong, fraternal organization which owned the subject property from 1953 to 1984.

Mr. Al Macy, Architect and President of Gaslamp Quarter Council.

Ms. Elizabeth MacPhail, attorney and historian and author of "When the Red Lights Went Out in San Diego", a detailed history of the Stingaree District where the subject property is located.

Mr. Ed Murphy, President of Gaslamp Quarter Foundation.

Mr. Robert Miles Parker, member of Historical Site Board and local historic preservation artist.

Mr. Dan Pearson, President of Gaslamp Quarter Enterprises and owner of subject property.

Ms. Billy Riley, Managing Director, Gaslamp Quarter Enterprises and planner of Chinese Historical Museum on premises.

Mr. Joseph Quin, grandson of founder of San Diego's Chinatown, resident of same block as subject property for sixty-two years and intimately familiar with its history.

Mr. Art Skolnik, Architect and Executive Director of Gaslamp Quarter Council.

Mr. Michael Stepner, Assistant Planning Director responsible for overall City supervision of historical sites and current planning for city.

Ms. Sally Wong, Executive Director of Chinese Social Service Center and daughter-in-law of first Chinese owner of subject property, Wong K. Tong.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

a. Research Design for archaeological investigation of site by Dr. Ray Brandes, submitted to SHPO December 1, 1984, pages 1 to 15.

b. Documentation of Historic Structures by Charles Hall Page and Associates, dated August 1980, pages 11, 34 - 35, 40 - 41, 64 - 65, 79 - 80.

2. Secondary and published sources:

a. "The Climb to Gold Mountain", San Diego Reader (weekly newspaper), dated April 8, 1982, pages 14 to 23.

b. "When the Red Lights Went Out in San Diego", by Elizabeth MacPhail, booklet published by San Diego Historical Society, pages 1 to 28.

c. San Diego City Directories from 1916 through 1934.

E. Likely sources not yet investigated: none known.

F. Supplemental Material:

Search for Historic Photographs of site:

1. A search of the San Diego Historical Society photographic archives was undertaken on by Anne Pierce, graduate student in historic preservation at University of San Diego on March 21, 1985. In her efforts to locate historic photographs of the site she reviewed the following volumes, a total of twenty-seven.

"Chinese in San Diego"

Book #1 Businesses and Chinatown/Chinese Institutions

Book #2 Chinese Junks and Wharf scenes (skimmed)

Book #3 Hall of China - Miscellaneous

Book #4 Chinese Mission (Community Church) - Occupations

Book #5 People

Book #6 People

Book #7 Ah Quin Family

Book #8 People (Hom)

"Gaslamp Quarter"

Gaslamp I

Gaslamp II

"Clubs and Lodges"

"People - A" (for other Ah Quin possibilities)

"Saloons"

"Erickson - Aerial Views of Downtown San Diego"

Books #1 and #2

"Aerials" (not Erickson)

Books #1 and #2

"Apartments"

A - F

G - end and unidentified

"SENSOR Collection"

Street scenes 8- to 8-221 and 8-222 to 8-302

Buildings (seven volumes) 5-0 to 5-933

List of Photographs found:

In "Chinese in San Diego" Book #1 includes a photograph of a map of the area made in 1912, four years before the construction of the building in point.

Two 1980 photographs of the building were found but the building's appearance is identical to its present appearance as illustrated in photographs submitted herewith and previously.

July 1946 aerial view of Downtown San Diego illustrates the back of the building, its western facade and the roof. That photograph is attached as Exhibit #3 to this submittal.

2. As part of the November, 1984 efforts to vacate the eligibility determination on this building, Dr. Ray Brandes of the University of San Diego searched for historic photographs of this building without success at:

California Historical Society in San Francisco

Los Angeles Public Library

San Diego Public Library, main branch

San Diego State University

University of California, San Diego

University of San Diego

San Diego Historical Society archives

Journal of the San Diego Historical Society

3. Elizabeth MacPhail, historian and author of "When the Red Lights Went Out in San Diego", reviewed her files and advised, on March 22, 1985, that she possessed no historic photographs of this building.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Horton/Grand Saddlery Hotel Project consists of the reconstruction of two 1887 Victorian hotels, the Horton Grand Hotel and the Kahle Saddlery (Brooklyn Hotel) on Island Street between Third and Fourth Avenues. The site is adjacent to the Gaslamp Quarter National Register District and the recently relocated and restored 1850 William Heath Davis House and Park, the community headquarters of the Gaslamp Quarter.

The two hotels will be reconstructed with a common lobby area containing two restaurants, a lounge and garden area. The combined hotels will contain ninety-nine guest rooms and eleven suites with banquet and meeting facilities. The project will provide 148 permanent jobs and link the Gaslamp Quarter to the new Convention Center to be built directly southwest.


The lobby of the Saddlery Hotel, on the site of the building discussed herein, will contain a Chinese Tea Room and display space for the soon to be created Chinese Historical Museum of San Diego. This offer of display space in the hotel lobby has been enthusiastically accepted by the local Chinese community and is seen as the nucleus for the development of such a museum. A formation committee of twenty-six individuals and organizations has been identified to meet in late April, 1985.

The project is expected to cost \$11,880,800.00, of which \$8,100,000.00 was provided by the sale of Marks Rehabilitation Bonds, \$2,120,000.00 was raised by private equity funds, and a \$1,040,800.00 in UDAG funds was matched by \$620,000.00 from the local agency.

This report was prepared by the undersigned, consultant to the Centre City Development Corporation for 106 compliance procedures.

This historical report is supplemented by the photographic documentation and sketch floor plan required by the documentation requirements imposed by letter dated March 13, 1985 from the National Park Service, attached hereto for reference.

Respectfully submitted,

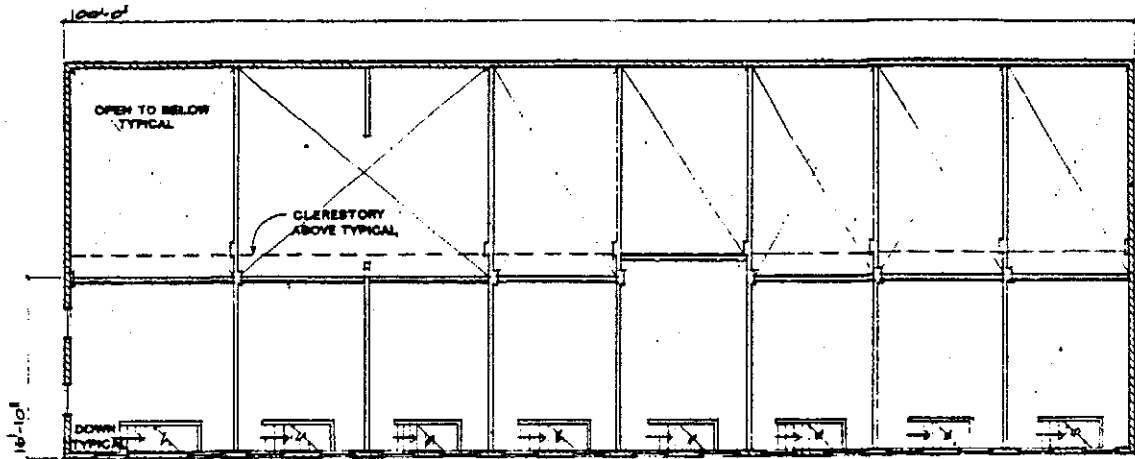


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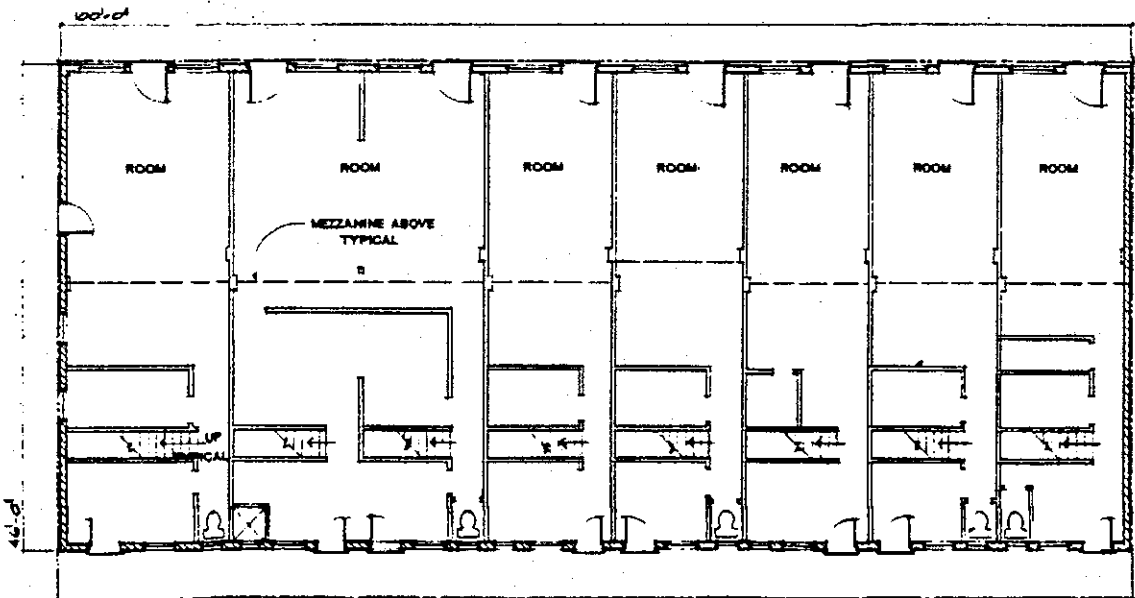


MEZZANINE PLAN



1 5 10

ISLAND AVENUE



THIRD AVENUE

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



1 5 10